

# S06E07 Inside The Seven Mountains Mandate And The Rise Of Turning Point USA

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Doctrine of Discovery, Turning Point USA, Christian nationalism, Seven Mountains Mandate, Charlie Kirk, Dominionism, Christian supremacy, cultural institutions, academic freedom, indigenous values, rhetoric, higher education, free speech, institutional change.

## SPEAKERS

Jordan Loewen-Colon, Adam Brett, Speaker 2, Sandy Bigtree, Philip P. Arnold, Speaker 1

### **Jordan Loewen-Colon 00:06**

Matt, hello and welcome to the mapping the Doctrine of Discovery podcast. The producers of this podcast would like to acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation, Fire Keepers of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands and now introducing your hosts, Phil Arnold and Sandy big tree,

### **Philip P. Arnold 00:31**

welcome everyone to mapping the Doctrine of Discovery podcast. My name is Phil Arnold. I'm faculty in religion and also in Native American Indigenous Studies at Syracuse University, and the founding director of the skano great law of Peace Center at Onondaga lake.

### **Sandy Bigtree 00:49**

And I'm Sandy big tree, a citizen of the Mohawk Nation at aquani. I'm on the board of the indigenous values initiative. I was on the academic Collaborative for the skano Center. And yes, welcome. We're so glad to have you here today.

### **Philip P. Arnold 01:05**

Matt, yeah, great to have you. Matt, with us today is Matthew Brody. I'm going to have you introduce yourself, Matt.

### **Speaker 1 01:13**

My name is Matthew Brody. I'm a professor at the University of North Georgia. I teach in the English department, but my research focus and teaching focus is in rhetoric and composition, and I've written extensively about a group called Turning Point USA, and have a book about them now out, called The

Seven Mountains mandate, exposing the dangerous plan to Christianize America and destroy democracy. Happy to be here.

**Philip P. Arnold 01:39**

Wow, that's a lot. So talk about talk about your book. Talk about turning point USA, because I think it connects directly to our work in the Doctrine of Discovery. Thank you. Yeah.

**Speaker 1 01:54**

So turning point is a massive, sprawling organization, obviously founded by the late Charlie Kirk. Most people think of it as a college student organizing group. They have many chapters on many colleges. They also have many chapters in high schools. In fact, they have more high school chapters, and they do college chapters. But it is not just a young person group anymore, really. Since the pandemic, since they surged into an ideology of Christian nationalism. They have been serving all ages and all demographics, mainly white evangelicals, but they have expanded into the seven areas or the seven mountains. They have an arm for turning point in each of those seven cultural institutions. So it is a when I say sprawl organization. It has a massive physical location in Arizona, but also it is a nationwide movement that pushes Dominionism, that pushes Christian supremacy, and that pushes, of course, conservative political ideals along with anything that relates to Maga. It's budget, it's hard to figure out, actually, but there's so many different arms. But the turning point itself, turning point USA has a budget about \$100 million separate, is that it is one of their arms, the political arm called Turning Point action, which probably is 50 million right now. But that seems like a lot of money, and they do a lot of money, a lot of things with all that money. That is, they have money to burn on way different things. So I started writing about turning point several years ago, when they first became popular with a thing called a professor watch list, which is their list of professors that they don't like and don't agree with. And I was put on that for writing an opinion piece against allowing concealed weapons on college campuses here in Georgia, which is now a law. And to be honest with you, I didn't know who the group was when they started in that list, and it's grown to several 100 now, and they use it in different ways, to scare people and to watch people. But they're known for more than just college organizing. They're known for most recently, they do everything. Every year they do an event down in Arizona called am fest or America fest, where they train organizers and train people to knock on doors and worship night. And they obviously have any type of speaker that you can think of in terms of names, but really, what they're about is, you might call them a grassroots organization, even though they're funded by big donors, but they affect a lot of different cultural institutions in our society.

**Sandy Bigtree 04:24**

Matt, could you explain what the Five Mountain mandate is?

**Speaker 1 04:28**

I'm full encompassing group, so the title of the book comes from the areas of turning point in which they're involved in. But that that mandate these seven mountains dates back to 1975 really. So for the last 50 years, this sort of ideal of Dominionism has been circulated within charismatic Christian circles, but also beyond that. And the idea, of course, is that Christians would take back society, take it back from anti Christian four. Forces from demonic, forces from forces that weren't were secular. So they would take back society in these seven cultural institutions. And I always leave one off the list when I

list them, so I'm gonna read them from the table. Good. The mountain of education, the mountain of government, the mountain of religion, the mountain of family, the mountain of business, the mountain of media and the mountain of entertainment. So these seven areas of our culture, of course, have many different things involved in it, but with turning point and the history of the seven mountains, mandate is not merely to produce a Christian parallel universe in all these areas, that Christian schools, Christian movies, all those things, but, but to dethrone those that run those institutions, or those isms and ideologies that control those institutions. So if you think about just for example, the mountain of government seems pretty easy to elect people to federal and state office that would follow this and implement policies that would flow from that. The other ones, you know, are a bit more, you know, subjective and vague and how they're doing it. But the idea, of course, is to dethrone the demonic forces, to throw them out and install Christian businesses or Christian organizations or Christian leaders in these areas. And I want to end by describing it the Chris the seven mountains. Mandate is a minority movement on purpose. It is not about convincing the majority of Americans to be Christians. It's not about evangelizing. So we would have that it is about inserting a minority to rule over the rest of us and and so the idea that it destroys democracy, I think, is based upon that, but also the idea that they would be going after majority rule in America by the minority. So that's really important to the seven mountains mandate, because they see themselves as fighting and winning God's battle. So every time they lose and every time they fall back, it is really just the true believers keep going. And we see that in a lot of different areas, but the seven mountains mandates been around for about 50 years. It was these list of seven came from Bill Brett and Campus Crusade and Cunningham Youth With A Mission. But over the years, it's changed, not the list itself, but the idea of how you go about winning. This culture has changed. And I think that Charlie Kirk, as an heir to this showed us the culture warrior. Part of it that the culture war is not just to be fought and to win elections, but it is about taking back our culture for Christianity, or for evangelical Christianity,

**Sandy Bigtree** 07:32

it's quite a big shift from personal enlightenment or salvation,

**Speaker 1** 07:37

yes, and that's why I want to emphasize that, it is not individual change. They're not going out to convince individuals to perhaps believe in the gospel or believe in their one area that they want to influence. It's an institutional change. They look at institutional change as coming before individual change. They often speak of reformation before revival. That is, they want to reform the culture and create a Christian consensus, and that might lead to revival, but they're very much interested in installing this minority power over these institutions,

**Sandy Bigtree** 08:09

and as you say, that's a huge threat to democracy.

**Philip P. Arnold** 08:13

Yeah, well, I can appreciate your your interest in rhetoric, because it always impressed me. I guess that Charlie Kirk was somebody who wanted to go to universities, go to where young people would debate him, right and and with him, with his with his murder. What do you think are the consequences to turning point right now?

**Speaker 1 08:45**

Yeah, that's a tough one, and we've seen a lot of their doubling down, certainly on seven mountains mandate doubling down this Faith and Freedom, right kind of rhetoric. I do think they're built to last. I don't think that they're going to disappear anytime soon, and then they're built to last, because they have so many areas in which they can influence the culture and one subsides. They have all these other areas, right? And I think that we're still in the phase of, you know, people doing things for Charlie, whether winning election, knocking on doors, starting chapters. That's still happening. And so I do think perhaps over the years that may fade, but really they've started to define themselves as a movement based upon one person. So I do think they're built to last. They still are getting millions of dollars in donations, and they're still getting loads of interest from high school and college students. If you think about it, you know, since they have high school and college chapters, they a person could be under the influence of turning point for eight years, like high school and college. What do you do then, when they graduate college? Well, they can be inserted into a turning point church chapter. So they have a lot of ways in which to keep their pipeline going. So after Charlie's assassination of. And, you know, I do think that they introduced themselves turning point, introduced themselves to a lot of new people at that memorial service, which to me, was a very clear Christian nationalism memorial service, but it gave a lot of people a clear picture of what it is they do and what really stood for. And I think that many people were attracted to that. So I think that they're built to last. I think they're going to last. They're certainly going to play a big role in the next year in terms of elections, but they do way more than that now, so I think that over the years, they'll continue to double down on what it is they do.

**Philip P. Arnold 10:37**

So I mean, there's so many comments and questions that I have, I think so I'm reflecting on on a class I taught called religion and white supremacy last semester, and and the students were very concerned about about Charlie Kirk's murder. I mean, I must admit, I didn't know who Charlie Kirk was until, you know, the news started covering him like crazy. I'd heard him on, you know, occasionally on a YouTube or something like that, but, but really hadn't followed this at all, excuse me and but the students all knew who he was. They all knew, and this is in a blue state, right? You know, this is, you know, they, they're very, they're active in all these college campuses and everything. So, I mean, so obviously that was kind of a wake up call for for me, that the students were very concerned about this, and now we had a lot of conversations about, what kind of Christianity are we talking about, right like, it seems like even in your conversation just now, there seems to be a kind of struggle going right now about What is Christianity? You know, what is the nature of it? What is is, what is its theology? I see definite, definitely different politicians. I'm thinking of, what is it? James Talarico in Texas, who's very openly, you know, liberal in his theology, and pushes back against the kind of Christian nationalism that we're talking about. There are others who espouse, of course, the Maga sort of Christianity. But I mean, the students are kind of because many of them are Christians, many of them are athletes and things, and they espouse a certain kind of Christianity, but they don't recognize this as Christianity. Oftentimes, you know what I'm saying. You know what kind of so Christian nationalism is a certain kind of form of Christianity where others are espousing a kind of different Christianity. And I'm I asked them, well, will the real Christianity please stand up? You know,

**Sandy Bigtree 13:07**

well, coming from an indigenous perspective, I might add, you had mentioned your class, which which really helps them understand the dilemma we're facing now with Christian nationalism, is teaching them about the doctrines of Christian discovery, because being indigenous, we are well aware that we were attacked. Our systems of identity were attacked from day one. They infiltrated our clan system. The Christians switched us from a matrilineal society to a patriarchy, and that was, you know, ruled by the husband. Our wives were our women were forced to marry men and take a vow of subservience. It was already being viewed as a system and how to supplant a new system to control indigenous people in these lands. This is why we call our podcast mapping the Doctrine of Discovery, because that doctrine affected every aspect of who we are. Affected our family, the way we practiced rituals, how we ate, how we related to our land, how our rivers were re routed for industry. I mean, it's very complex, and you're talking about these seven mountains can relate to that? Yeah, we better start talking about Christianity and these powers trying to control and dominate every aspect of our existence, because it's happening right here, and you've articulated this?

**Speaker 1 14:41**

Yeah, I think that turning point is very good at taking, we'll say, complex theology, or high minded theology, and putting it in a bumper sticker format, or putting it in talking points that that students who recognize Christianity but don't necessarily get beyond the basics. But. And then being a part of that group saying, I agree with this. So if you think about writing the book about Genesis, one and the verse is about and the seven mountains mandate, including Charlie Kirk and turning point, take that from a take care of creation, or use up creation, however you want to see that into a cultural dominion, right that they reinterpret that is not just taking care of creation, but taking care of culture. And they add to that a particular verse in Jeremiah that Charlie Kirk repeats a lot that he's got from other people. And I always forget the reference. I think it's Jeremiah 29 when he says, you know, seek the prosperity of your city, and when your city prospers, you too will prosper. What Charlie does is replace the word city with nation, and this was part of the the exiles. And Jeremiah was talking about people who were living in exile, so there wasn't necessarily a definition of nation that they had now. But what Charlie does by replacing the word city with nation is making, of course, nationalism, but suggesting that though Christians, whom he was speaking to, who, you know, for a long time, evangelicals, were not involved in politics, or don't think they should be involved, or don't mix their religion politics in the way that he does, he's trying to convince them to do that. And by replacing that word, he is speaking directly to that to that audience. And I think that resonates very you know, everybody remembers or still right recalls Bible verses because you memorize them, and remembering that one thing so encapsulates what turning point is set out to do, right? And they do that well. They train their people well, and they sit down and have these talking points and get them to repeat them, so much like Bible verses, that they can go out and talk to other people. I just remember turning point has had a chapter on my camp or my school for on and off for several years now, and they were tabling one particular semester, and I walked out and talked with them, and they had no idea who I was, which is really weird, because I was on their, you know, Professor watch list, and I was talking to the person tabling and, and, you know, I was trying to engage her in a conversation, but she kept giving me the talking points, and, you know, trying to move on to the next person. And it was just very clear that they wanted to say these few things, and then these few things would convince a bunch of people, and then they would move on, but they weren't really interested in that. And I say that and I say that because that's what Charlie does at these debates. He's very good. I mean, no doubt he's very good at what he does, but I would not just classify

this as some sort of debate, right? He Yeah, he frames it as proved me wrong. He's never proven wrong because of the way in which he limits or constrains or changes the question or jumps in. So there's a reason why his fans like him. And there's a reason why there's a bunch of videos of people looking stupid, because turning point does that with their campus events.

**Philip P. Arnold 17:48**

Yeah, so it's very thin kind of argument style, right? It's a or, it sounds very Hebrew Bible, we'll say, or Old Testament kind of like framework.

**Speaker 1 17:58**

They do love their Proverbs in that short, yeah,

**Philip P. Arnold 18:01**

well, also that was used by the pilgrims and others to justify the taking of land and the extermination of native people. So yeah, it's not surprising that that becomes the kind of those become the operative Bible verses that are utilized. But I think once you start poking at this theologically, you know, once you start poking at it and looking at what is Christianity, I think that becomes a kind of way to, you know, what deflate the whole kind of theological framework, you know, in a way,

**Speaker 1 18:40**

yeah, No, no, I think that there's, there's still a divide between the type of Christians that turning point attracts, and we'll say reform evangelicals. They're not exactly one to one ratio. I think that spend way more time in their Bible and in their Sunday school and reading other people. They're not as attracted to Turning Point and Christian nationalism, but that said they're both in the in the Maga camp. So it's, you know, they're, they're getting the same feeds from Fox News and other places. Yeah, right. It's very hard to separate the theology from the politics. And I've done several presentations now, and people always ask me that question, how do I speak to my right Maga Christian neighbor, how do or my Maga Christian family member, like they just don't want to listen. And I, as a rhetoric professor, I really don't have an answer either. It takes multiple conversations, and sometimes there's just no way around it. But it is a theology they've built up, and I wouldn't call it complex, but they provide many avenues for people to get into it that are very easy and much like Bible verses being

**Philip P. Arnold 19:45**

remembered, yeah, so I have again, several questions. So can you dig into the funding for us a little bit? I. Mean, it's, it's very shady, but I mean it's not, it's not well meaning Christian people that are backing turning point to \$150 million right? These are currently

**Speaker 1 20:13**

have big donors, and that's hard to know who exactly it is, because their tax records are secret, but every now and then we get some open windows. I mean, one of the original donors was a guy from Montana who gave Charlie his initial seed money. But they have some really good, really good, really high profile backers. You know, the Koch brothers are certainly that their sprawling network does that. But, I mean, they just got a donation from \$10 million from a woman who runs a conglomerate business that I've never heard of, to rename their building for her. But they do a lot to, obviously, to get these big

donors. But I do want to point out when I say it's grassroots, they do have the big donors, but there are plenty of people that will donate 25 or \$10 or whatever, and buy a hat or buy a turning point merchandise. So they they have both. And really, it's very strange to see merchandise now after Charlie Kirk's death, but they're selling merchandise now that reflect Him. They have the freedom tertiary that he was, that was killed in they have hoodies that say, you know, faith over tyranny or no tyrant hoodie. So there's a lot of things that they do to collect the individual person, but they're really good at of course, those those big donors, and I would say that that big money allows them to go after the little person. Yeah. So it's kind of hard to know what you know, total amount of money they're making, but I will say, if you just think about Charlie Kirk himself, he was, you know, famous for giving up his Turning Point salary. He made maybe \$350,000 a year from turning point south. But he had millions of dollars in all these other places, and that's just his money, right? Turning Point is a much bigger than just him. So it is a sprawling

**Philip P. Arnold 21:58**

economic powerhouse. It's a, it's a money making operation, right? I mean, and as you point out, this is part of the prosperity gospel kind of line, you know, that is and, and I mean that that kind of theological, that way of thinking, sort of spans New Age world, the New Age world. And, you know, you know, I remember my grandmother sending money in. You know, the prosperity gospel has been around for a long time, and I think they're, they're all kind of feeding off that trough, right?

**Speaker 1 22:35**

No, yeah. So it's fascinating to, you know, read histories of prosperity gospel and then to connect it to this institutional you know, change movement is that the prosperity gospel is about individual right. If I believe enough, I will be wealthy. You add the national part to that right, if I become an entrepreneur, if I start a business, God will bless me and my nation. And the initial selling point for the seven mountains, mandate from Bill Brett was to go into Christian business men usually, and say, you've been really successful at this business part. Let's use your money and your expertise for God's kingdom. I mean that that is the move from prosperity gospel to, I don't know, prosperity institutionalism or whatever, but it's clear that they're banking on this idea that if we're all successful, God will bless us financially. So the more money they get, it is a sign of God's blessing. And that leads to a national blessing. And there's some people in the seven mounts man, they do talk about a national blessing. If that, if you know capitalism runs right, we'll, we'll all be blessed. Wow.

**Philip P. Arnold 23:38**

It's all around a kind of monetary framework. So you've pointed out some fissures between evangelicals, for example, in turning point. And I'm wondering about some. I'm wondering about others, you know, within sort of the Maga Christian world. I you know, one of the people we talked about in my class was Pete hegseth and his dominion kind of theology, wearing Crusader tattoos on his body, that sort of thing, right? Yeah, you know, the inspiration is the Crusades, of course, which is, is the backstory for the Doctrine of Discovery, right? That, you know, the whole age of discovery is fueled by the Muslim, the perceived Muslim threat, right? And so, and really the failure of the crusades in the 13th century. So I'm wondering, I'm wondering, are there, can you, can Eric, can you articulate the some of the fissures that we might be seeing in these different kinds of movements are, for example, the the kind of Crusader, I can't remember the name the group, but you know the kind of crusading

Christian group that Haig said this part of the. And is that distinct from the dominion theological framework, or this, or the turning store, turning point people,

**Speaker 1** 25:10

I do think they're all kind of melded together. Doug Wilson is the patriarch of that movement that Pete had sex is a part of sprawling organizations in Idaho, Doug Wilson has appeared, you know, with Charlie Kirk at different events. They're now partnering together on a series of schools. So they're definitely tied in together. I see, I do think that that these kind of different streams of different we'll say again, organizations or influencers like Doug Wilson and Charlie Kirk and others might come together when they're allied together and they don't seem to have any differences. So they will work together. Yeah, I think that what the thing that may keep them apart or may make them sing, is they each want their own success, right? They each want their own lane.

**Philip P. Arnold** 25:59

It's there are some game, right? I mean, they're all making their own money, right, right?

**Speaker 1** 26:04

So, yeah, they're going to partner together, but turning, I mean, but Doug Wilson still wants his thing in Idaho, and he's opened his new church in DC now. So they want to work off each other's brands, because that's what it is now. And, you know, go much higher, I think also with the dominion theology. You know, the differences in theology, if there are, don't matter. I mean, some of them are post millennial, some of them are pre millennial. Some of them are kind of in the middle of whatever. But they all have the same role as to change this culture, either to bring on the rapture and the persecution, or to bring back Jesus in some sort of glory. They've now decided that, you know, we have the same goal so we can work together. I mean, back in the 70s and 80s, they didn't often come together because of that distinct difference. But the the in time seems to or differences have seemed to have faded. So whatever you think of Doug Wilson, he is in line with turning point as far as he goes. Yeah.

**Jordan Loewen-Colon** 26:58

Do you need help catching up on today's topic, or do you want to learn more about the resources mentioned? If so, please check our website at [podcast.dotdoctrineofdiscovery.org](http://podcast.dotdoctrineofdiscovery.org), for more information. And if you like this episode, review it on Apple Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts. And now back to the conversation.

**Philip P. Arnold** 27:18

I don't know how quite how to ask this question, since you're on the list, and we know others that are on the list, Does it worry you? It didn't influence your life?

**Speaker 1** 27:34

It didn't when it came out, because nobody knew who they were, and writing the book, I mean, I was went back and looked at that. They, they've kept an extensive profile on me, and I was not aware of that until I did a podcast in Arizona with a group, and they, they had mentioned to me that turning point had signed up for the podcast they could tell because of the email addresses. And I was like, That's odd. Why are they carrying what I say in a podcast? So they've updated their website or my profile, you

know. And I think the last update was in 2024 but they constantly add things that I say, and, you know, it didn't bother me before, I will say, obviously, with the killing and assassination of Charlie Kirk, you know, I did think for a minute about the attention that would come, and a lot did, certainly faded since then, but I think the watch list is important to turning point, but because of all the areas that they've now gone into, it's become a minor thing to them that they still do, and have partners that do these viral videos, and professors doing stuff and saying stuff in class or in assignments they don't like, and they still do that, but the watch list has become less important to them because they've have all these other things. Now that doesn't mean, of course, they aren't doing things like they have a school board watch this now, which is school boards and school board members they don't like, right? So they're doing things that you know about, lists and watching, but particularly I have not had any other than some terrible emails have not had any negative impact. Now that said, I'm a white dude in Georgia who teaches at a school that very people have ever heard of. I have heard stories of other people having it much worse, and especially if you get targeted by a group like libs of Tiktok, their partner online, which our school was back in October, the hurricane can last probably a week of just terrible things that you get and you might need to take down your profile and things like that. So there's always a fear of that. But I think that for whatever reason, turning point is less than the professor watch list. And oddly, while I did say that they've updated their profile on me, they have not targeted me since the book came out, which is really strange, because it has gotten a lot of attention, obviously, because of Charlie Creek's death, and that could be. Busy, obviously, with other things, but my family was very concerned about that when it first happened, and I think that they, they have ignored me, mainly because, I mean, the book is so I don't know, right on, right there's nothing to disagree with, or there's no errors in it, right there it would take, it would take a lot to debunk it, and they're not really into doing that much, that much work.

**Philip P. Arnold 30:22**

Wow. So yeah, Adam, our producer, just reminded me that Chandra Mohanty, our friend and colleague here at Syracuse University, is one of the people on the list, and she gets harassed on a regular basis. You know? You know why colleges and universities. Why, you know? Why is that particularly or seen as particularly threatening to turning points framework and where is it? How is it expressing itself, or how has it affected academics working at other colleges and universities.

**Speaker 1 31:04**

Turning point's not the first to come up with a list of professors they hate. Obviously, they based upon a guy named David Horowitz his list of the 100 worst professors in America that came out in early 2000s and David Horowitz still runs his organization in Colorado, and he's the person that introduced Charlie to a lot of different people. Higher education being a target is not new, but I think what turning point? Obviously, the social media has helped. Turning Point spread its thing. But I think there are two reasons why Turning Point attacks colleges universities. One, it's easy to do, not so much because we're terrible, but because this idea of free speech and being an open campus and inviting people in, and you could say anything you want here, there's opportunities for them to do that. And when I say Charlie Kirk is an advocate for free speech, what I mean is he uses free speech. I don't think he's interested in everybody having free speech, so we're a soft target in that regard. But I also think that there is a bigger movement, obviously, outside of turning point against higher education, because of the ways in which it constantly challenges our thinking in any type of class you should that should happen,

right? You're not just given new information, but information you didn't know, but also you're asking to rethink, conceptually, things that you may hold dear. And I think that that attacks upon that really have helped turning point, because they're not just saying it's a liberal indoctrination camp. They're not just saying you should defund them. They're saying that they're, they're, they're a evil kind of cancer. Charlie's famous phrases, you know, whatever happens on college campuses does not stay there. So they see this as a, as a, as a center of a spreading, you know, disease, and that has just turned up the rhetoric against college and university. You can say our tuition is too high. You can say I don't get a great job. You can say I waste my time on classes I don't care about those are all things we could debate, but I can't. I can't come back with to somebody who thinks that this is a spreading disease of evil. It's really hard to convince someone of that. So how that trickles down to students? Of course, they might not really believe that, but they didn't say, Well, why am I? Why am I bothering with your class? You know, all I want is my classes, so you can see that no matter how much they raise a rhetoric, it always has an impact down the pipeline. As you mentioned, there are plenty of students who are supporters of Charlie Kirk, and sometimes they do take it themselves, right to videotape people or to turn in people's assignments to different websites. So Right? They are trained to look for the things they want to find.

**Philip P. Arnold 33:44**

Yeah, yeah. And, you know, it's, I hadn't intended to talk about this, but it is an assault, or a different kind of an assault on the humanities, right? It's the humanities is under, under the gun, certainly at our university and other universities, for a variety of reasons. But this is another, kind of, another assault in some way.

**Speaker 1 34:10**

No, yeah, yeah. So these, these, Charlie is famous for saying that the, you know, the humanities are a waste of time in terms of classes, and yet he has spent, he spent most of his 20s reading, you know, great books that were part of humanity's education, right? So it's really fascinating to see that it really you need a good teacher when you read books, because if you read them with just you, you'll come out with you at the end.

**Philip P. Arnold 34:39**

Really well said, Wow, well, so, so, how do you how do you think that we should push back against this kind of cultural, you know, these, these cultural. Results in some ways. I mean, for lovers of democracy, can you summarize what you think we ought to be doing, you know, as a society, as academics, as concerned citizens,

**Speaker 1 35:16**

you know, I was writing the book, and it's a pretty negative portrayal of this absolutely Christianize America. It's a wake up, right? Yeah, yeah. And I was like, this is this is bad. I've got to provide some sort of positive hope, you know. So at the end of each chapter, I try to do a couple paragraphs on, like, what is it supposed to look like in these areas if we were to live in a healthy democracy? I'm certainly not an expert in political science. I'm just a regular voter like anybody else, right, trying to imagine what these things would look like if you did not have these attacks. And I think that the answer to a minority movement, it has to be a majority movement. What that majority movement entails, I think has to be

around the ideals that would bring us all together, and those are democratic ideals and free speech and freedom of religion and education, those things do resonate with still a lot of people that said, You know, I think that because they're going after institutions and not just individuals, and academic freedom is a great example. Academic Freedom used to be that that the government would target an individual professor or fire them because they didn't like what they wrote or said. Right now, academic freedom is being fought at the institutional level, because you have state legislators passing laws that institute and policies by university systems that are that, are that are affect masses amount of people, not the individual professor, like somebody asked, Has your university pushed back against your writing? Well, no, because they don't really care, right? They, you know, one person, it does not disrupt their institutional power. And I think that throughout the history, we've seen these institutional changes happen over time, sometimes more violent than others, but the idea was they always go after the institutions, and the institutions were changed, perhaps one by one or over the series of time. But I think that the answer to that is we is, sadly, though, a long game, back to the institutions. This is not going to be a quick fix. If you think about again when Donald Trump leaves the political scene, when perhaps Magna leaves the scene, turning point is setting itself up to be the inheritor of that they're not going away anytime soon. So that means all the people that they have affected are not going away anytime soon. So yes, you have to outvote them to become a majority. But you also have to think about institutionally, how you can protect institutions from these ideological takeovers. And that requires doing or not doing what they're doing right. It requires not being anti democratic. It means selling the messy democracy discussions as well, but also it means that promoting the idea of institutions, promoting the good of institutions, not just the government, but all these other institutions, as being not just good for the common society, we think about education being for the common good or for the public good. That hasn't, we'll say, caught on a lot, because it seems vague to many people, it doesn't affect them. So you need really to have people part of a movement that they can identify with, which is what Turning Point is doing, and have that movement based upon ideals that we all share. That is a much longer book that I don't have time to write or an expertise in, but I would say that the if they're going after institutions. Your answer has to be institutional. Yeah.

**Philip P. Arnold 38:43**

Interesting, yeah. And, you know, ironically, so particularly the, you know, academic study of religion, which I'm committed to, has been under assault for a variety of reasons. And we could talk about that, but, but we have a critical analysis of the phenomenon of religion, right? It's not advocating for a particular religion or whatever, but, but ironically, what's happening today in the country is making our classes much more popular, right? People are really wondering what is going on. And I tell my students, I've told them for 30 years. I've said, If you don't know about religion, you just don't know what's going on in the country. You know, know what's going on in the world. Yeah, so you know, just a basic informational level of, or, you know, a basic knowledge of religion, it helps to, helps you to interpret what's going on. So again, ironically, it's, it's, it's sort of helping make the case that for the Humanities, in some way, certainly for the academic study of religion, i. And that's what we find in, you know, our work in the Doctrine of Discovery, you know, I mean, it's this, you know, many, 10, you know, tentacled, you know, phenomenon, right? We talked to lawyers, we talked to environmentalists. We've talked to a variety of, you know, indigenous activists from around the world. It's, it's something that is that has, you know, helped students and ourselves, really, to give us a framework on how we can

understand what's happening. Right? You know, yeah. And I think likewise, I mean, if the more light you shed on these kinds of phenomena, you know, the better off we are.

**Sandy Bigtree 40:55**

Particularly how religion was used as a weapon in coming into this continent, it was so incredibly violent, and was the means by which it justified the taking of native lands, rerouting of waters, you know, the massacre of indigenous peoples. It's been kind of glossed over, you know, and then we're taught, you know, the country's all about freedom and freedom of religion and all of this stuff. But meanwhile, this is the backdrop of what's really happening. Yeah, right. And they didn't really when they came into this continent. They may have come, most may have come thinking they're going to build a Christian country, but they saw these civilizations that were living in peace and that there was a different way of relating to the world around them. And so real effort was to squash those cultures and silence them. And yet, a lot of this message still got out. I mean, there were indigenous speakers in the early 17th century, you know, going to or late sixth, 17th century, going to Europe, and speaking about what true freedom is about, what what equality is really about, you know, and, and there are books being written right now that are attributing these indigenous orators having inspired the Enlightenment thinkers in France during that period, because these speakers were known, written about for centuries, and they preceded all the Major you know, enlightenment writers of the time so and

**Philip P. Arnold 42:43**

well, and impacted the French Revolution, you know. So the irony here is that that, you know, the Haudenosaunee were in the middle of, we're in the heartland of the Haudenosaunee, or the Iroquois, and they have been directly, well, they've been thanked by the United States 1987 as as having an impact on the development of Western democracy. So, you know, the it's ironic that, on the one hand, these these kind of Christian efforts to demolish democracy. You know, on one hand, also benefit from these indigenous roots, right?

**Sandy Bigtree 43:27**

In different way of looking at the world, the whole notion of Christianity, it's it's all built around this dichotomy of good over evil. It's war. War is at the very basis of this theology, right? And if it's indeed an extension of the Roman Empire, which many scholars do believe it was used by the Romans, then you know, it explains warfare and domination in the world and how the Bible was written so

**Speaker 1 44:00**

humanity's last last fall, I wrote a blog post is sort of a call to put democracy on the syllabus. And I didn't just mean people that teach in political science or teach in rhetoric, that every discipline should try to put democracy on the syllabus, because obviously the election was coming up and we didn't win, and I think that with the 250th anniversary of America coming, we've already seen how the Trump administration is telling our history. We also need to have that type of thing again, campus wide. It can't just be the people in your area or my area, because honestly, very few people take our classes, even though they're popular. But also, I think that we need to convince other people that that their work in one area matters to democracy. It is not a separate I get a lot of professors who live kind of separate lives there, right? Yeah, live in their academic silo and not affect everything else, right? Um, but, you know, that's a that's a

**Philip P. Arnold** 45:01

tough road, yeah, so I'm going to get, I'm going to let Adam jump in here with a question or a comment.

**Adam Brett** 45:10

Thank you so much. So Phil. So I want Phil and Sandy to talk about the work that they've been doing. You know, I'm in the UK around the 200 and 50th there, and how that's so different than what's happening here in the US. And then I kind of want to shift directions, and I have a follow

**Philip P. Arnold** 45:35

up question, yeah, no. So, so in May of this year, there's going to be an exhibit at the London National Archives on called Revolution 250 the making of the USA. It's, sounds rather benign. It's, you know, they have millions of documents in their National Archives, 1000s of, you know, over 1000 years of history. But, you know, they wanted to do an exhibit on this. We've befriended people there over the last few years, and we were interviewed on a, you know, kind of an extensive over about three and a half hours and a half hour to talk about the Haudenosaunee influence on western democracy. So, you know the British, who have a very different view of revolution, 250 you know, are, they're very interested in these indigenous roots, as were the French before the French Revolution and all that. So, so democracy we need. And this is just, you know, kind of celebrating what you just mentioned, Matthew, is that we need to be discussing democracy. We need to be discussing its origins. It's not just the Greeks or, you know, or, you know, the, you know, the British and it's, it's, it's a many, many faceted thing and, and one of the failings I think, in education has been civics. You know, the disappearance of civics. I got it in high school, you know. But I don't think we teach it, you know anymore.

**Sandy Bigtree** 47:27

But a big part is the recording of history. The British were telling one story of this interaction with the Haudenosaunee. We were all being taught like that same narrative, and yet, when you look at the primary text. They're very conflicting, because the history they're writing are the native people they manipulated through Christianity to pose as being war chiefs and whatnot. Those were titles assigned to these individuals by the British. And then you have the peacemakers, the Haudenosaunee, and you have those documents and those accounts of their nationhood, of being peacemakers and they, frankly, in England, could not interpret these conflicting primary sources. They didn't know where to even begin. So we were able to help them with that, to show it was your manipulating in history, you know, these forces, and recording this history, and then some of our researchers are Irish, and they'd go, wow, they did that to the Irish. They did that to us. And so it's clarifying some of the histories. Now, you know, in the empire there. So I think this is going to crack open a lot.

**Philip P. Arnold** 48:42

Of course, nothing like that is happening here in the US. So, you know, they're interested, but nobody here is

**Adam Brett** 48:50

thank you for that. Y'all, I agree this is such an important piece in the at the 250th anniversary of America, I feel both like not wanting to throw a party and more a funeral, but also not wanting to throw

the funeral and so shifting directions, Matt, I was wondering, can you help us understand? One, is there a difference between dominion theology and the seven mountain mandate and two, can you kind of connect seven mountain and dominion to the larger sort of history of Christendom that we see unfolding in Europe and

**Speaker 1 49:36**

the US? I don't see a difference between dominion theology and seven mountains mandate, I think that Dominionism is a term made up by academics, a pretty good one. But at the same time it was trying to describe this idea that they were taking back dominion and what involved in that theology, I think, translates very directly into the seven mountains mandate, if you think of theology. Again, as a conceptual framework. The Seven Mountains mandate is a strategy for, you know, applying that, much like I call seven mountains a strategy for Christian nationalism, again, a framework for doing that. So I don't see a difference between the two. I do think, of course, that Western civilization plays a key role in the seven mountains mandate, because you are not just trying to save America, you're also trying to save Western civilization, which means, of course, that it needs saving, or that it's somehow died. And they often point to the secularization of Europe, and they don't want that to happen in America. And the idea of saving Western civilization, which something Charlie Kirk mentions a lot, goes back further, you know, into the 70s, I think when people were talking about the roles of education, primarily primary and secondary education, and how that was changing to them, it was losing their Christian influence and saying the pledge every day to a more secularized influence. I remember exactly reading a chapter in Bill Brett's book, then the chapter about education, he tried to trace this secularization back to some British guy. I forget his name that came over to America to give education as somebody that taught Horace Mann. I forget the guy that taught him. But the idea was that there was this line they could, they could trace back. And at some point, you know, Christendom lost its power, its influence, and we need to get that back now, when that was in America again. They came up with this list in 1975 because they were responding to things that happened in the 60s. But at the same time, this responding to keeps going back and back until, I don't know, I don't know when it started, because they believe that America was founded as a Christian nation, so it didn't start there. So at some point, Western civilization was lost, and we need to return to its origins, but also we need to reshape its future so it matches something that can't be lost again. And so the person who studies rhetoric from Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, what they're describing as Western civilization is not the same thing that I would do. So it's always about these myths, as you point out, the manipulation of history. So it's it's kind of odd to see the same thing repeated against again every decade or every 100 years, but at the same time, when it's repeated, it's changed slightly. So Charlie Kirk's version of the seven mountains mandate is different than Bill Brett, even though you could draw a line back to

**Adam Brett 52:24**

them, thank you so much. That really excites me, because, as a historian of religion, who trained with Phil and learned so much from Sandy myths are so fascinating to history of rewards, and they're so important to history of religions, and I really appreciate what you just highlighted, that this whole Make America Great Again, this whole seven mountains mandate is mythic because there's no point that they want to return to. And if you keep pushing, it can be anywhere from the world being created, dinosaurs being put here to test us. Genesis 128, the 1970s becomes

**Speaker 1** 52:59

dinosaurs. Put her to test us. I haven't heard that one before.

**Adam Brett** 53:04

I grew up attending a rather fundamentalist school for high school, not of my own choosing, and that was one of the ones we got there. So I want Phil to kind of chime in about how these social how these mythic ethologies function socially, like what people get out? Yeah,

**Philip P. Arnold** 53:34

yeah. So I think, I think we probably, we could probably wrap it up there. Adam, I just like for you to once again plug your book, Matt and tell us a little more about it. I understand it's doing very well so, so why don't you just plug it once more, and then we'll be

**Speaker 1** 53:59

out sure the seven mountains mandate is published by Westminster John Express, which I'll be disheartened, not to mention that they took me on with having no previous public writing. And the book is about the seven mountains mandate, Charlie Kirk plays a central role. And I will say that, you know, in writing the book, we wanted to make Charlie Kirk a central character, because he is but also I wanted to make the mandate a central character, so I tell the story of how we got from the list to a mandate to Charlie Kirk. And that comes across in every chapter. There's a chapter on each of the mountains, and I say that, you know, it was published or published with a religious publisher. And I think that they told me when they got the proposal even they had never heard of the seven mountains and their Presbyterian PC, USA publisher. So you can see, it's not as well known as people think, but this idea of Christian nationalism, I think, is getting more attention. And yes, it certainly has sold lots of copies, and many people are discovering it, but I will say that they've done a great. Westminster as marketing, I've done several podcasts, and they're selling at a bookseller's convention. And so it's interesting to always ask people, had they ever heard of Charlie Kirk before his death? I always get maybe a third of the room, maybe a quarter of the room, to say, raise their hand. And yes. So I do think he's still an unknown quantity out there. And I think this book if you want more information about him, is a good thing to go to. Matt.

**Speaker 2** 55:24

Do you have a discount code you could offer?

**Speaker 1** 55:27

I did. I think that's expired now, because it was just for the first, first month of it being on there. But actually it is discounted on Amazon right now, like three or \$4 from the list price of 25 and the Amazon e reader is like 16. And in March, the audio book is coming out. If you guys want to wait on that,

**Philip P. Arnold** 55:53

well, congratulations. It's really very important intervention. I'll say in the religion world today, whether and I know you don't come from our world, but you know that it's a very important contribution. So thank you. Matthew Brody and I appreciate your willingness to be on our podcast.

## S06E07: Inside The Seven Mountains Mandate And The Rise Of Turning Point USA

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Yes, sure happy to be here.

**Jordan Loewen-Colon** 56:20

The producers of this podcast were Adam DJ Brett and Jordan Lohan colon. Our intro and outro is social dancing music by Oris Edwards and Regis cook. This podcast is funded in collaboration with the Henry Luce Foundation, Syracuse University and Hendricks Chapel and the indigenous values initiative. If you liked this episode, please check out our website and make sure to subscribe. You.